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THE CLAIMS OF PURITANISM.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE

ANNUAL ELECTION,

MAY 31, 1826.

BEFORE

HIS EXCELLENCY LEVI LINCOLN,

GOVERNOR.

THE HONORABLE COUNCIL,

AND THE

LEGISLATURE OF MASSACHUSETTS.

BY REV. ORVILLE DEWEY.

Pastor of the First Congregational Church, in New-Bedford.

BOSTON :
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Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, MAY 31, 1826.

ORDERED, That Messrs. THAYER, of Braintree, BARRY of Boston,
TAYLOR, of Northampton, be a Committee to present the thanks of
this House to the Rev. Mr. DEWEY, for his discourse, and request a
copy for the press.

Attest

P. W. WARREN, Clerk.

~~(F)~~ Some of the topics of the following Discourse will be found to
be more fully discussed than it was convenient to do at the time of its
delivery.

SERMON.

PSALM LXXXIII.....2, 3.

I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN A PARABLE; I WILL UTTER DARK SAYINGS OF OLD: WHICH WE HAVE HEARD AND KNOWN, AND OUR FATHERS HAVE TOLD US.

There is a peculiarity in the circumstances of this occasion, which strongly marks the origin of our civil institutions. That the opening of a Legislative Assembly, that the commencement of a new political year, should be solemnized with the delivery of a sermon, is a custom, peculiar if not to our own Commonwealth, at least to the New England States, and would be thought a singular feature in the habits of any people. We are reminded at once, of those days when the deliberations of Parliaments were interrupted to make way for the solemnities of religion, when the dignity of legislative functions was exchanged for fasting and prayer, and when the proud eloquence of the orator was obliged to yield for a while to the stern exhortation of the preacher. We are reminded in other words, of the days of the Puritans.

The transition, therefore, will not be difficult, from this occasion, to the character and claims of Puritanism. Speaking as I do to those who are descendants of the Puritans, I

need make no apology for undertaking to vindicate them from some portion of the unmeasured obloquy and abuse which have been heaped upon their memory. The time has come, I believe, to do them this justice. The liberal spirit of the age more than warrants—it encourages even the humblest attempt to do this. And surely, if the general liberality of the age, is a warrant for our theme, the *filial* relation which *we* bear to Puritanism may be fairly considered as a *claim* upon us.

Nor let it be thought that the tie of descent has preserved us altogether, from that general injustice which has followed for three centuries, the name of Puritans. I doubt if we are not even yet, half-ashamed of our fathers. The faults of the age still obscure to our eyes the virtues of the men. The mistakes and singularities of the sect, disguise from our view their piety and heroism. And still, too, there lingers amidst our Republican simplicity, an incongruous and weak admiration for orders and titles. If the men who came to these shores had been the possessors of fortune and honor, if they had been Princes, instead of being Puritans—if a band of warriors had come, though from the slaughter of half the world—or if there had come a body of nobles and cavaliers, with stars and coronets, with shields and banners, though they had been driven from their native land, for the freedom of their morals, and not for the freedom of their consciences—if this had been our origin, there may be those to whom it would be more welcome than to look back to the untitled names and unadorned virtues of the Fathers of New-England. And yet I am not afraid to aver, that there

never was a nobler ancestry commemorated in the annals—no, nor in the legends of any people, than that which it is *our* privilege, if not our pride, to call our own. And although to some this may appear *as a parable and a dark saying*, I shall undertake to show, according to the real import of those words, in our text, that it is a matter of fact and of history.

To vindicate the honors of PURITANISM IN AMERICA, therefore is the principal and ultimate object of what I have now to offer. But, to open the way for this, I shall invite you, *first*, to consider the character and claims of the Puritans of England.

The Puritans arose in England about the middle of the sixteenth century, as early as the commencement of the reign of Elizabeth. They took their name, not as is commonly supposed from pretending to a purer character than their fellow christians, but from their preferring a simpler, and as they apprehended, on *this* account, a *purer* mode of worship. They were at first, distinguished as a religious body ; but the most important influence by far, which they have exerted in the affairs of the world, they have exerted as a political body, in the cause of political liberty. This honor, however, does not belong to the Puritans *alone*: and the obloquy which has fallen to their lot, has rested upon them, chiefly as *pioneers* in the cause of free institutions. It was the same body, actuated by the same principles which about the middle of the seventeenth century, took the name of Non-Conformists,—embracing the Independents, Presbyterians and Quakers. And it is the same body still, the same in its ori-

gin, the same in the great principles of religious independence, which, in later times has fallen under the denomination of Dissenters.

Let me now observe, that the odium which has attached to this great and increasing body of the people of England, began where their name has ended—*in their dissent*. The Puritans were at first a very small minority ; and the title by which they were called, had grown into a bye-word and a reproach, long before their success had exasperated the feeling of contempt with which they were regarded, into fear and hatred. The first crime of which they were guilty was dissent.

And bitterly was it visited upon them, as the perpetual hostility of Elizabeth from the first, though her ablest ministers advocated measures of lenity—as the Ecclesiastical Court of 1583, and the names of Parker and Whitgift—and as the barbarous law of 1593 against recusants, well testify. For simple dissent, not from the doctrines, but from the formalities of the dominant church,—for simple dissent, not for setting up an opposite worship; but only—according to these bloody enactments,—only for abstaining from the established worship, these men were persecuted with fines, imprisonment, and banishment ;—and if the exile allured by the ties of kindred, returned to his home, he was doomed to death, as a common felon, without the benefit of the clergy. It was long after this—it was after having borne with unexampled moderation, that they formed themselves into a political body to *act* with equally unexampled moderation, in defence of their rights

not only as Christians, but as men. Their first crime then, I repeat it, was simple and inoffensive dissent.

Let us, therefore, meet this accusation in the outset, for as the world has commonly taken it, it does not fall short of a charge of ignorance, arrogance, and even heinous guilt. And to meet it, we have but to ask one simple question. How has the cause of knowledge, liberty or religion ever advanced in the world, but by this same hated dissent? The watch-words of unlawful power, not only in England, but all over the world, and through all ages have been,—“no altar, no throne!” no established religion, no established monarchy. And nothing, indeed, but the dread sanction of the most intolerant religions has been sufficient to support the systems of despotic power which have ruled the greatest portion of the earth. But the very watch-words of the more improved and liberal systems of these times, are—if I may venture so to denominate them—“no dissent, no improvement!” Forbid the one, and you effectually exclude the other; break up this necessary dependency of things, and the march of civilization, of the arts, of knowledge, liberty and religion is at a stand.—How else, I ask again, can the world advance? Suppose that a set of erroneous opinions, or of bad and corrupt institutions prevails among mankind, or among the people of any country; —how is it to be changed? Do you expect that the mass of any community will, together, or at the same moment, begin the work of reform? Then you expect a miracle. You are seeking a sign; and no sign will be given you. The only possible method of advancement then, is for some

minds to take the lead, to become enlighteners and guides of the rest—to become *dissenters*.

Nay, I shall venture to go a step farther, and to maintain, that in a country where monarchical and aristocratic institutions prevail, the most intelligent and virtuous part of the community, if they are not utterly borne down and crushed by the arm of power, are most *likely* to be on the side of dissent. I say not, that they will be dissenters, technically so called, but they will be on the side of *real* and inward dissent. If men depend for their standing in society on their birth, if they hold a superiority to all others simply as princes and nobles, they will of course be less likely to seek for any better distinction. While at the same time, the mind of the country, in proportion as it becomes free and pure, will regard with displeasure or with disdain such cheap and factitious honours. Nay, even the titled peer, with a liberal and generous spirit, will be a dissenter in his heart from a system so partial and unjust. And the cause of dissent, in England, let it be said, has not wanted, and does not now want, co-adjutors, thus doubly noble. I know, that there are some great minds, which the exigencies of government need, and which the patronage of government can buy. But the cultivated mind, the retired and unbiassed intellect, the inspired genius of the country will be a different stamp. Ask of the literature, the poetry, the eloquence of England, and see what will be the answer! It must be so. And if it is so, will all the noble genius and the admirable virtue of a country bow down before such things as empty titles and

signs of heraldy? No : the gifted and the good will feel, and they ought to feel,—what has been eloquently said of the Puritans too—“that they are nobles by the right of an earlier creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand.”

But to return ; as all who are in advance of the body of the community are necessarily dissenters, so, every system of improvement that is, or ever has been in the world, has been and is, and forever must be, at its commencement, a system of dissent. What is our own political Constitution but political dissent?—and dissent, too, which the potentates of the world but ill brook—dissent which they would gladly give over to some Star chamber or Court of high commission. Our religious institutions, too, are founded on the same principle ; and I should be glad to know, what religion that is now in the world has *not* been a dissent from some former religion. Our churches are a dissent from that of England —and the English from the Church of Rome—and Christianity itself is a dissent from Judaism and Idolatry.

It is strange, indeed, that in a world which as it has grown from infancy, has never advanced a single step but by innovation, this very principle of innovation should have been hunted down, in all ages as if it were the very principle of evil, the arch enemy of mankind. Yet it is no less certain than strange. Not the puritans only have been visited with derision and abhorrence. The champions of liberty have always been accounted traitors ; and the apostles of the purest religion that has ever appeared in the world,

rived, when the whole truth may be told, with a reasonable chance of gaining credit. It seems, even yet to be a matter of policy not to insist upon the full merits of the Puritans, lest their cause should be risked altogether. And, thus, it is common to speak of their solemn countenances, and singular manners, and tones of voice, and their aversion to dress and amusements, as if these were serious and weighty charges ;—as if the peculiarities of which so much has been made, were any thing more than the drapery in which these men acted their parts on the theatre of human affairs ;—as if the great work to which they had devoted themselves must go forward like a feast, or a song. But this is not the greatest wrong that they have suffered at the hands of their defenders : though this superficial charge, has, perhaps, sunk deeper than any other. But it has been too easily admitted that they were an illiterate and vulgar class of men, and that they were guilty of inexcusable violence in the prosecution of their object. It has been implied that they did not write their history, because they could not : and did not defend their actions, because their actions were incapable of defence.

Now in answer to these charges, it is enough to say, that their conduct speaks for itself. They *need* no defence but *the very histories of their enemies*. Partial as the histories of that period are, and are proved to be, by the recent and more rigid examination of the original documents, yet are they all that we want to vindicate the Puritans from the charges that are brought against their intelligence and moderation.

It is impossible, within the limits of a discourse like this, to go into the examination of a historical question ; and I must content myself with bringing before you, on the authority of the Historian already quoted, some notices of this most remarkable period. And, indeed, I scarcely know a more impressive passage in history, than that which describes the first meeting of Charles with his Parliament in 1625. The youthful Monarch presented himself before the Representatives of the nation, and with an almost chivalrous confidence, threw himself upon their candor and generosity. He frankly exposed to them his situation, mentioned the debts with which the Crown was burdened, the ordinary charges of government, the expensive wars in which the nation was involved with Austria, with Spain, and with Germany : and without urging his request, he left it to the Commons to vote him the needful supply. And what was the answer ? "The House of Commons," says the Historian, "conducted by the wisest and ablest Senators that ever flourished in England, thought proper to confer on the King a supply of two subsidies!"---a sum so far from being adequate that it was a "cruel mockery" of his wants.

Let not the pecuniary character of this transaction hide from us its real import and consequence. *The withholding of supplies* was the only check which the Commons then held upon the encroachments of arbitrary power. And they determined to use it. They gave on this occasion no signs of rashness, passion, or violence. They had long and bitterly suffered ; they had fully deliberated ; and now they were

determined firmly to act. They stood in the calm dignity of men resolved to assert their rights ; and no exigencies of government, no blandishments of a young and insinuating Monarch, no fears of that reproach which has since been heaped upon them, could make them swerve for a moment from that great allegiance which they owed to these rights of the people and of human nature.—We do not say that the liberal party in the House of Commons were composed exclusively of Puritans, but we say that they were the origin of that party—that their principles formed it—that their religious zeal sustained it—that they composed at all times the strength of that party. And we say too, that their strength did not lie in prejudice ; nor their zeal, in vulgar ignorance. On these points, Mr. Hume, shall again speak for us. “The Puritanical party,” says he, “had a great authority over the kingdom ; and many of the leaders among the Commons, had secretly embraced the rigid tenets of that sect. “And, though the religious schemes of many of the Puritans, when explained appear pretty frivolous, we are not thence to imagine, that they were pursued by none but persons of weak understandings. Some men of the greatest parts, and most extensive knowledge, that the nation at this time produced,”* he tell us, were all of this class. And again, in speaking of the third Parliament in this reign, which was summoned in 1628, the same Historian gives a noble testimony to the character, to the respectability, intelligence and moderation of this popular party. “When the Commons assembled,” says he, “they appeared to be men of the

*Chap. L.

same independent spirit with their predecessors, and possessed of such riches that their property was computed to surpass three times that of the House of Peers ; they were deputed by boroughs and counties, inflamed all of them by the late violations of liberty ; many of the members themselves had been cast into prison and had suffered by the measures of the Court ; yet, notwithstanding these circumstances which might prompt them to embrace violent resolutions, they entered upon business with perfect temper and decorum."* And "nothing," speaking of the course which they pursued,—"nothing" says he "can give us a higher idea of the capacity of those men who now guided the Commons, than the forming and executing of so judicious and so difficult a plan of operations."†

These historical details into which we have entered, relate, let it be observed to the Puritans during the first fifty or sixty years of their existence as a sect—to their earlier conduct as a political body—to their character in short as it has a bearing on the judgment, we are to form of our own Ancestors. That their conduct at a later period, was marked with more or fewer of the faults that always attend upon success, need not be denied. And yet, it is worthy of remark, that the accusations which are brought against this body of men, in every period of their history, relate more to the forms than to the spirit of their conduct, more to their manners than to their morals, more to their prejudices than to their principles, more, in fine, to their trifling peculiari-

ties than to their substantial objects. And whoever will take the trouble to turn from names to things—whoever will examine, for instance, the acts and ordinances of the Long Parliament will find a spirit, and conduct there, which he will scarcely think of sentencing to ignominy, by barely and contemptuously pronouncing the name of *Puritan*.

I care not for a name ; nor did they care : it required, they well knew, something more than hard names to put them down. But for the **MEN**, who in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, boldly stood forth in defence of the liberties of the people of England, I maintain that they were *the champions and Fathers of Modern freedom.*

And in estimating the value of this influence it should be remembered that the freedom of these days is a very different thing from that of ancient times. Christianity, which has left nothing untouched in the whole sphere of human improvement and welfare, has imparted a marked and decisive influence to the cause of modern liberty. It has made this liberty a nobler gift than ever entered into the conceptions of ancient heroes. Teaching men to live together as brethren, to love every man his neighbour as himself, and teaching him, too, that *every man is his neighbour*—elevating the destiny of every human being to an equal, to an immortal grandeur, Christianity has unfolded to the world a new community of interests, new principles of equality and reciprocity, new laws of society and of government. It is not, however, till within the last two centuries that this political influence of Christianity has been developed: *To the hands of the*

Puritans was this great cause committed ; and they proved themselves not unworthy of the trust. Animated at first by the love of religious liberty, demanding toleration as the undoubted privilege of that mind which God had made free—feeling that the rights of conscience were not only rights, but *duties* also, they were insensibly lead and at the same time powerfully strengthened to assert the claim of political freedom. They did assert and maintain it ; and in doing so, they have accomplished a work next only in importance to the introduction of Christianity itself.

The age is not insensible to the greatness of this work, though it is forgetful of the obscure and despised band of men who began it. The world indeed is filled with enthusiasm and glorying in the cause of popular and free institutions. The period in which we live is teeming with projects and hopes ; and the mighty spring of every goodly and hopeful design is the freedom of the age—is that mighty truth of the age, that *men should be left freely to work out their own welfare*. Through all the borders of this continent there is not a mind, I had almost said, that is not glowing with pride at what has been accomplished, or with expectation of what is to come. Never, I repeat, since the introduction of Christianity, has the intellect, the improvement, the hope of the world received such an impulse, as it has received from the cause of modern freedom. Be it, then, remembered,—be it the more remembered, because it has till now been forgotten—that the men who first sus-

fered and fought in this cause, were the Puritans of the 17th century ! Yes, the very men whose name has gone abroad among the nations, as a bye-word, and a hissing, and a thing to be laughed to scorn, are the very men who stand at the head and as patriarchs of all free communities, and who shall yet beheld in reverence as the Fathers of every coming and brightening age of liberty and happiness !

But it is time to leave this discussion, and bring into view the claims of *Puritanism in America*.

I will endeavor not to weary you with details on this subject, that are familiar. But something must be said of the character and circumstances of the Puritans of this country, and of the sentiments with which in this country at least they ought to be regarded.

I say, then, that the Puritans of New England were an *intelligent* body of men. This is not commonly admitted, to the extent that the truth demands of us. There is a vague impression abroad that the Puritans were unfriendly to learning. But to learning, in its place, they were not, as a body, opposed. They were opposed to it as constituting the sole qualification for the ministry of the gospel. They were opposed to human wisdom when held in competition with divine. They valued religious knowledge more than scientific. In short, to reduce the matter to its elements, they held intellectual accomplishment to be no substitute for virtuous and devout feeling. And in this, they were right. And they were right, I had almost said,—they were excusable, at least, in carrying this position to extravagance, for the

opinions and maxims of *that* age, all tended to beat down and destroy this momentous truth. We have no difficulty in admitting, that some of the most ignorant and fanatical among them, carried this doctrine too far. It is what will always happen to any party. No doubt, they did, too indiscriminately, decry human learning. But this was not the spirit of the body. Can any one look around upon the schools, the academies, and colleges of this country, and admit the idea for a moment? It is a remarkable fact that in eight years after the first landing of the Massachusetts Colony—amidst poverty, danger, and discouragement, the foundations of Harvard University were laid.—Nay more; with all the boasts which we hear at this day of the spread of knowledge among us—with all the easy compassion, or easier contempt for the early days of ignorance, it may be asserted without any fear of contradiction from those who have examined the subject, that there was a greater proportion of well informed, of educated men among the first settlers of this country than has ever been found among their children! To bear out this assertion, it will be sufficient to mention among the small number of forty one men, who first landed at Plymouth, the names of Bradford and Brewster, of Carver and Winslow, of Morton and Prince; or to point out in a little wider circle of observation, the Winthrops and Endicott, and Dudley, the Higginsons, and Wilson and Cotton.

There was an extent of views among these Colonists that could belong to none but *intelligent* men. It was one of the most striking peculiarities attending their enterprise, that it

was professedly undertaken for no present purposes of gain, or subsistence, or safety. Other lands might much better have given them all these, than this which they so emphatically called "a waste and howling wilderness." They did not come here for what the wilderness could afford them. They did not come to this coast like a party of wild marauders to hunt seals and otters, to gain a scanty subsistence, to provide for the season that was passing over them ; to pursue the chase or the enterprise for plunder one day---to revel the next---and to take their departure on the third :—they came with more serious and exalted purposes ; they came to lay the foundation of a great empire ; they came to sow the seeds of freedom and knowledge. And the fair fruit of their intelligent designs, has appeared in every successive period of our history. It has appeared in the consummate wisdom that guided our affairs in the Revolution. It has appeared in the State papers of that period, which not only breath a temperate and enlightened spirit of liberty, but are no less remarkably characterized by the beauties of a classical style. It has appeared in the happy constitution under which we live—a model to eight sister Republics that are now rising on our own continent—an example to which the sages of the old world are looking with admiration.

In the next place, it is common to admit that the Fathers of New England were *men of piety*. But it may be, that their piety after all, is as little appreciated as their intelligence. It was piety of no ordinary strength. It was the very principle that gave to their intelligence its direction

and its activity. And it was indeed a vigorous principle, as their patient labors and sufferings, their unshrinking fortitude, their unconquerable resolution, and unshaken trust in God, well testify. When they arrived from a perilous voyage, the free exercise of piety was among their first objects. The altar of stone and of turf was the first work of their hands. The knees of the devout pilgrim pressed the earth, before his spade penetrated its bowels for food.

But there is a trait of their piety, that has perhaps been less considered. I mean its disinterestedness. They sought religious freedom scarcely more for themselves, than for their posterity. They hoped to propagate pure and unshackled christianity, though (to use a phrase of their own) "they should be but as stepping stones" to those who came after. Their proceedings, their declarations, their writings all exhibit this pious and noble disinterestedness.

It may be interesting, and it is to my purpose to notice, that the first printed *Sermon** which we hear of as preached in this Country, was on this remarkable text—" Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth;" (i. e. another's welfare—) in which the preacher urges them not to live for themselves, alone nor only for one another, but for their posterity. A strange topic, surely, for the wilderness and for the waste and rocky shore of Plymouth! A strange precept to be heard amidst the bustling strife for existence! Yet such was the spirit of the men, and such was the spirit of their enterprise. I have heard it said, even in this age of plenty, by those who live on this heritage of their disinterested la-

*By Robert Cushman, in 1621.

bors,—I have heard them say, “we must take care of ourselves—we have as much as we can do, to take care of ourselves.” So thought not our Fathers. “And you, my loving friends and adventurers to this plantation,” said the preacher, “as your care has been first to settle religion here before either profit or popularity, so, I pray you go on to do it much more.” “I rejoice greatly,” says he, “in your free and ready mind, to your powers,—yea, and beyond your powers, to further this work :—the memory of this action shall never die !” How prophetic was the saying ! Truly “the memory of this action shall never die !” Already is it on the tongues of millions ; and millions unborn shall celebrate it to the end of time !

Let it not be forgotten, then, at least by us, the immediate descendants of these men, for the sake of our gratitude and our virtue, too, let it not be forgotten, that when the weary pilgrim traversed this bleak coast, his step was lightened, and his heart was cheered, by the thoughts of a virtuous posterity—that when our fathers touched this land, they would fain have consecrated it as a holy land,—that when they entered it, they lifted up their eyes towards heaven and said—“let this be the land of refuge for the oppressed and persecuted, the land of knowledge, and O ! let it be the land of piety.” Let the descendants of the pilgrims know, that if their Fathers wept, it was not for themselves alone—if they toiled, they toiled,—or as one of them nobly said, they “spent their time and labors, and endeavours, for the benefit of them who should come after ;” that

if they prayed, they prayed not for themselves alone, but for their posterity. And, little, it may be, do we know of the fervour and fortitude of that prayer. When *we* pray, we kneel on pillows of down, beneath our own comfortable dwellings : but the pilgrim kneeled on the frozen and flinty shore. *Our* prayers ascend within the walls of the consecrated temple : but the mighty wave and the shapeless rock, and the dark forest were *their* walls : and no sheltering dome had they, but the rolling clouds of winter and the chill and bleak face of heaven. We pray in peace and quietness, and safety,—but their anxious and wrestling supplication went up amidst the stirring of the elements, and the struggle for life ; and often was the feeble cry of the defenceless band broken by the howling of wild beasts, and the war-whoop of wilder savages.

Yes our lot has fallen to us in different times ; and now it is easy for us no doubt, calmly to survey the actions of those who were engaged in the heat of the contest, and we have leisure to talk at large about ignorance and bigotry and superstition ; and we can take the seat of grave wisdom, and philosophise upon the past, when to philosophise is all that we can do. Yes, it is easy, now that the forest is cleared away, and we bask in the sunshine which they have opened npon us, through the deep and dark foliage,—it is easy, no doubt, coolly and nicely to mark their mistakes and errors :—but go back to the struggle with fear, and want, and disease—go to the fields which they cultivated, and see them with the felling axe in one hand, and the weapon of defence in the oth-

er,—go back to all the rude dwellings of poverty and trouble;—but you cannot—even in imagination you cannot. No : the days of trial and suffering *have been*—but it is not for us, even to understand what they were ! This little only is required of us ;—to do justice to the virtues which we have no longer any opportunity to imitate.

Nor in urging such an obligation as this, has it often been found necessary to combat the prejudices of mankind. On the contrary there has been a universal propensity to do more than justice,—to do honour to the achievements of past times. There never was a people unless we are the exception, who were not inclined to receive the most specious story that could be told of their ancestry—who were not glad to have their actions set forth in splendid fable. The epic histories of Homer and Virgil, all fabulous, as they were, were received with uncontrollable bursts of enthusiasm by their respective nations. The Israelites sung the early history of their wandering tribes in all their solemn assemblies. The memory of former days and of elder deeds, has always, and among all nations, been held sacred. The rudest people have not been wanting to their still ruder ancestry. Immortal poems have preserved their memory. Or their ballads of olden time have kept alive, with their simple tale, the recollection of ancient heroism and suffering. In after days History takes up the theme, and

“Proud of the treasure marches down with it
To latest times ; and sculpture in her turn,
Gives bond, in stone and ever-during brass
To guard them, and to immortalise her trust.”

This propensity has given a language to nature itself. There is no portion of the earth but has had its consecrated spots : places, the bare mention of which, is enough to awaken, in all ages, the reverence and enthusiasm of mankind. There is some hill or mountain, that stands as a monument of ancient deeds. There is some field of conflict, which needs no memorial but a name ; or some rude heap of stones at Gilgal, that needs no inscription ; or some rod that is ever budding afresh with remembrance.

And is our own land destitute of every scene that is worthy to be remembered ? The City—nay, the very Church in which we are assembled answers for us. And around us—among all these rich and peaceful scenes that meet our view —there is not a plain but it has been the trenched field of the warrior : there is not a hill but it stands as a monument. And the structures of art that shall rise upon them, shall only *point them out* to other times, as holy. But harder contests than those of blood and battle have been sustained in this land. And the Rock of Plymouth shall, in all ages, be celebrated as the Thermopylæ of this new world, where a handful of men held conflict with ghastly famine, and sweeping pestilence, and the wintry storm ; held conflict, and were not conquered. And so long as centuries shall roll over this happy and rising nation, shall wealth and taste and talent resort to that hallowed spot, to pay homage to the elder Fathers of New England. —Go, children of the pilgrims, might we say to all the inhabitants of the land, it is well to gather around that shrine of our Father's virtues, that monument of their toils and suf-

ferings, which the chafing billows of the ocean shall never wear away. It is well to make a holy pilgrimage to that sacred spot. It is well that gifted orators and statesmen, should proclaim our enthusiasm and our gratitude in the listening assembly. But with what striking emphasis might it be said to those who make this pilgrimage at the present day, “ye go ; not as your Fathers *came* in weariness and sorrow—not as they came amidst poverty, and peril, and sickness—not through the solitary glooms and howling storms of the wilderness ; but ye go, through rich plantations and happy villages, with chariots and horses, and equipage and state, with social mirth and joyful minstrelsy and music ; but, Ah ! remember that ye are gathering to the spot, which was once trodden by the steps of the houseless wanderer, which was marked with the pilgrim’s staff, and watered with the pilgrim’s tears.

It was a day of feebleness and despondency, which could not have admitted even the hope of what has followed. That which is to us a reality, could not have been given to them, even as a vision of the fancy. No prophet rose up to tell them this, and to cheer them with so bright a prospect of the future. And a prophet only could have dared to predict it. How little could our Fathers have thought, with all their pious, and I know not but enthusiastic confidence in the protection and favor of heaven—how little could they have thought, as they drew near to that shore which was swept by the winds of winter, and anchored in those waters which “the keels of commerce had never broken,” that in the progress of five or six generations, thousands

of gallant ships would be launched from this then solitary coast, that every part of that wide bay which spread around them, would each morning be whitened with the sails of commerce—that along these desolate shores, villages and cities would rise and be crowded with thronging thousands of their offspring ;—how little could they have thought, that in the closing period of two centuries, this whole world at the west would have been one wide avenue of enterprize and industry, into which millions of their children would have rushed, and borne on the tide of population till it almost met the waves of the western ocean !

The claims of ancestry, we know, are commonly held sacred in proportion as its date is removed back into ages of antiquity—in proportion to the number of successive generations that have intervened—in proportion as fiction and romance find aid in the darkness of some remote and unknown period. But though the character of our Fathers needs no such aid, yet I can scarcely conceive any thing more *romantic* even, than their entrance into this vast domain of nature, never before disturbed by the footsteps of civilized man. They came to the land where fifty centuries had held their reign, with no pen to write their history. Silence, which no occupation of civilized life had broken, was in all its borders, and had been from the creation. The lofty oak had grown through its lingering age, and decayed and perished, without name or record. The storm had risen and roared in the wilderness ; and none had caught its sublime inspiration. The fountains had flowed on—the mighty river had poured its useless waters—the cataract had

lifted up its thunderings to the march of time,—and no eye had seen it but of the wild tenants of the desert. A band of fugitives came to this land of barbarism,—with no patronage but the prayers of the friends they had left behind them,—with no wealth but habits of industry,—with no power but what lay in firm sinews and courageous hearts —and with these they turned back the course of ages. Pilgrims from the old world, they became inheritors of the new. They set up the standard of Christianity ; they opened the broad pathways of knowledge ; the forest melted away before them, like a dark vapour of the morning ; the voice of comfort, the din of business, went back into its murmuring solitudes ; the wilderness and solitary place were glad for them, the desert rejoiced and blossomed as the rose. We might almost take the description of it from the language of prophecy. The lamb lies down in the den of the wolf ; and where the wild beast prowled, is now the grazing ox. “The cow and the bear feed, and their young ones lie down together. The suckling child plays on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child puts his hand on the adder’s den.” Where the deep wood spread its solitary glooms, and the fierce savage laid his dark and deadly ambush, are now the sunny hill-side, and the waving field, and the flowery plain ; and the unconscious child holds his gambols on the ground that has been trodden with weariness, and watered with tears, and stained with the blood of strife and slaughter.

These are the days—these are the men, that we are called upon to remember and to honour. But it is not enough,

to remember their deeds,—we are bound, let me add in the close, to imitate their virtues. This is the true, the peculiar honour which we are bound to render to such an ancestry. The common measure of national intelligence and virtue is no rule for us. It is not enough for us to be as wise and improved, as virtuous and pious, as other nations. Providence, in giving to us an origin so remarkable and signally favored, demands of us a proportionate improvement. We are in our infancy, it is true, but our existence *began* in an intellectual maturity. Our father's virtues were the virtues of the wilderness, yet without its wildness ; hardy and vigorous and severe, indeed, but not rude, nor mean. Let us beware lest we become more prosperous than they, more abundant in luxuries, and refinements, only to be less temperate, upright, and religious. Let us beware lest the stern and lofty features of primeval rectitude should be regarded with less respect among us. Let us beware lest their piety should fall with the oaks of their forests ; lest the loosened bow of early habits and opinions, which was once strung in the wilderness, should be too much relaxed.

We are accustomed to speak of the early days of our history as times of danger. But there are dangers still to be encountered—the dangers of comparative abundance and luxury—of comparative ease and safety, of sensuality, of intemperance and effeminacy ; dangers to the full as alarming as those that beset our forefathers. Nay, the single evil of intemperance is, at this moment, more to be dreaded in the land than all the hardships and perils of the sea and the wilderness. The time has been, indeed,

when our villages were girded about with palisades, and fear held its nightly watch in all the dwellings of the land—when, at every howl of the faithful guardian without, the mother pressed more closely to her bosom the unconscious babe—when, at every faint and distant note of danger, the father sprung from his couch, and seized the ready weapon of defence ;—but oh ! better were this, than for that father to become himself an invader of the midnight silence of his dwelling, as he returns from the revels of the dissolute and profane ; and more gently fell the blow of the *savage* invader than the insane imprecations of a husband's wrath, or the blasting stroke of a friend's dishonor. The zeal of our religion too, may decline from the earnestness of former days,—and if it does, if in rooting up old prejudices, we tear away the very stock on which these prejudices grew—if our religion becomes little better than a religion of objection and scorn at the faults and errors of those who have gone before us, if the mind and heart of the people, as they become cultivated and refined, become cold and dead to all the aims and influences of a fervent piety—it were little to say that famine, and cold, and nakedness, that houseless and unsheltered poverty and want are nothing to be dreaded in the comparison.

But I feel admonished by the passing hour, to turn aside from this general discussion, and to offer the usual congratulations of the day. In doing this, I hope I shall be excused from any attempt to discriminate the particular

merits, or to define the duties of any of the respected members of the Executive or Legislative departments of the Government, before whom I have the honor to speak.

May I be permitted then, to offer my most respectful salutations,

To His EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR, and

To THE HONORABLE COUNCIL, associated with him,

To THE HONORABLE SENATE, and

To THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

I congratulate your Excellency and your Counsellors—I congratulate you, Gentlemen of the Legislature, on the peaceful, the prosperous, the fortunate period at which you are called to the exercise of your several offices. It has not always been, with these happy auspices, that the Magistrates and Legislators of this Commonwealth have been summoned to the discharge of their duties. It requires no aid of imagination to describe a very different assembling of this Government from that which we this day witness. It was not when every countenance wore an aspect of tranquillity and cheerfulness, that your predecessors of former days always came together—it was not with processions and congratulations, and the sound of martial music—it was not with the spreading forth of banners and the gallant display of soldiery:—but it was when fear, and perplexity, and gloom sat heavily on the general mind and countenance—it was when in yonder forests the savage was plotting in secret, or when, in later times, yonder waters bore upon their now powerful bosom the thunders of war:—it was then that every man stood in the place assigned

him as at a post of danger,—it was then that every man went silently, and alone, and with hasty steps, to the Council Chamber, and to the hall of Legislation—it was then and there, that the civil Fathers of this land engaged in solemn and stern debate,—and every man's hand was ready to strike the blow that his mind meditated ; and every man's heart dared to do the thing that his voice counsellel ! The question then was, whether the State should exist. How different is it now ! A great and flourishing Commonwealth has called you to the guidance of its affairs, and the great subject presented for your deliberations is, not whether it shall exist, but how it shall increase and grow, and multiply with every passing year, through every coming generation, the blessings of freedom, knowledge and virtue. *May* they extend and multiply through all time ! May the increased advantages of these days be the only measure of our increasing improvements ! May the virtues of the children be worthy of the toils and the sufferings of their Fathers !



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